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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 004531

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SUBJECT: GOI SATISFIED WITH KOIRALA VISIT, BUT NOT HOPEFUL FOR FUTURE

Classified By: Charge Bob Blake for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) Summary: As former Nepalese PM GP Koirala prepared to depart New Delhi after his meetings with GOI officials and politicians, M&A Under Secretary (Nepal) Manu Mahawar told Poloff on June 14 that the visit was a success for the GOI, allowing frank exchange of views on the political impasse in Nepal. The GOI reiterated to Koirala its opposition to Nepalese political parties forming a common front with the Maoist insurgency, and explained that the resumption of non-lethal military assistance was intended to encourage the King to make progress in restoring civil liberties and democracy. The GOI is working on an assessment of the RNA's ammunition needs, and looks forward to an exchange of views with the USG on this issue. End Summary.

Koirala's and GOI's Assessments

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¶2. (C) Mahawar declared that Koirala's ten-day visit to New Delhi was "very successful," as it incorporated meetings with the PM, Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi, FM Natwar Singh, Defense Minister Pranab Mukherjee, NSA MK Narayanan, FS Shyam Saran and BJP leader AB Vajpayee. In these meetings, Koirala assessed the Nepalese political situation as "worrying," saying that he saw no signs of rapprochement between the King and the parties. The parties insist that the King take the first step, Mahawar observed, and do not believe he is interested in a compromise.

¶3. (C) The GOI message to Koirala was that ultimately there must be a political solution to the turmoil in Nepal, Mahawar said. The first step requires reconciliation between the King and parties, followed by the presentation of a unified face for talks with the Maoists to bring them into a political settlement. Although the Palace and parties are currently at odds, the parties have remained in touch with the Maoists, Mahawar noted, adding that any eventual representative government would need to maintain communication channels with the Maoists as a prelude to negotiations. However, the parties are cautious in their interactions with the insurgents, Mahawar said, and recognize the dangers of compromising with Maoists still willing to use violence. Koirala told the GOI that senior political leaders are restraining younger cadres who have a more radical view and are more apt to recommend joining with the Maoists in calling for a republic, Mahawar reported.

Pressuring the King

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¶4. (C) Koirala emphasized the role that the international community should play to press the King to accept multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy, the Under Secretary said. However, Koirala stated that the pressure must come from the Nepalese people. In this regard, the parties were continuing their demonstrations in an effort to show the King that the people demand democracy.

¶5. (C) Mahawar observed that the political parties feel they cannot back down and compromise on their demands lest they lose the respect of the Nepalese population. Previous compromises have delivered less than the Palace agreed to, and the parties recognize that both the King and the Maoists now see them as powerless. They are convinced that they must continue their agitation to regain credibility. Moreover, if a political solution to the Maoist insurgency is necessary, healthy political parties will be essential, Mahawar observed. However, if progress to democracy is delayed too long, the parties will become so estranged from the monarchy that they will have no choice but to join the Maoists.

Military Assistance and Ammunition

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¶6. (C) The GOI explained to Koirala its rationale for resuming non-lethal military assistance, Mahawar stated, adding that Koirala heard that India's release of aid was intended as both a reward to the Palace for partial progress on restoring civil rights and encouragement for more. However, the GOI emphasized that the release of assistance did not "dilute" India's support for the political parties. Koirala indicated that the parties understand the GOI's

concern about Maoists, but complained that any military support gives the King the impression that he is on the right path.

17. (C) Mahawar stated that India plans to give only what military assistance it believes to be necessary to hold back the Maoists, recognizing that an RNA military victory over the Maoists is unlikely regardless of what aid is given. He reported that the GOI is "finalizing" its assessment of the RNA's ammunition needs in preparation for comparing views with the US, noting that India would prefer to wait until the RNA is "desperate" before providing ammunition.

Party Leaders Returning to Kathmandu

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18. (C) Koirala was scheduled to return to Kathmandu on June 15. Mahawar told us that now that there is a "little bit" of freedom, "most" of the Nepali Congress leaders who had been staying in New Delhi since February 1 will be accompanying Koirala to Nepal, and many of the other parties' leaders here are also returning to Kathmandu.

Comment

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18. (C) The GOI's warning to Koirala to avoid dalliances with the Maoists is reassuring, as is the continued interest in an exchange of views on RNA ammunition requirements. MEA has not proposed a mechanism for exchanging assessments of ammunition requirements. While MEA expects that the upcoming monsoon season will suppress overt agitation for a few months, it remains worried that without a plan for resolving the impasse, the political party dissatisfaction will boil over into an alignment with the Maoists.

19. (C/NF) On June 9, Naval Attaché provided Indian Defense Intelligence Agency (IDIA) with several JICPAC reports on Nepal and suggested that the situation in Nepal was an appropriate subject for intelligence exchange under the Morning Dew agreement. Informal comments from IDIA Liaison Officer indicated there is interest in pursuing the subject, but IDIA is not able to respond positively until cleared by the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). If this approach is accepted by the GOI, it will provide an appropriate channel for exchange of analysis on RNA ammunition status.

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